

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Claims 8, 9, and 23 are now pending in this application. Claims 1-7, 10-22 and 24-26 all have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 23 has been amended to be rewritten in independent form without the introduction of any new matter.

The outstanding Action presents a rejection of Claims 1-7, 10, 21, and 22 as being unpatentable over Sakakima et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,567,246) under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), a rejection of Claims 11, 13, 14, and 24-25 as being unpatentable over Gill (U.S. Patent No. 6,275,363) in view of Tan et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,962,080) under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), and a rejection of Claim 12 as being unpatentable over Gill in view of Tan et al. in further view of Sin et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,353,318).

Initially, Applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication that Claims 8, 9 are allowed and that Claim 23 is only objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim but would be allowed if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. As Claim 23 has been so rewritten, formal allowance of Claim 23 along with the allowance of Claims 8 and 9 is believed to be in order.

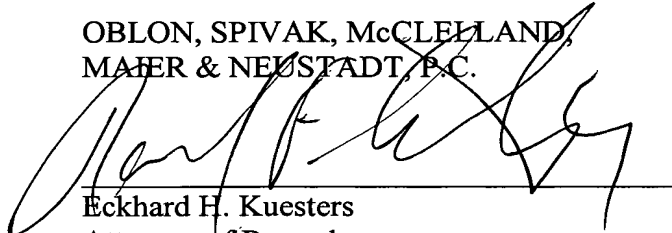
Furthermore, as Claims 1-7, 10, 21, and 22 are now canceled without prejudice or disclaimer the rejection applied relative thereto is believed to be moot. Similarly, the rejections applied as to Claims 11-14 and 24-25 are also believed to be moot in view of the cancellation of these claims.

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Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that as no issues remain outstanding in the present application, this application is clearly in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is, therefore, respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eckhard H. Kuesters', is written over a horizontal line.

Eckhard H. Kuesters
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 28,870
Raymond F. Cardillo, Jr.
Registration No. 40,440

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 08/03)

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